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SUBJECT: BULGARIA: 2008 ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP) REPORT

REF: STATE 2731

11. SUMMARY: This cable provides Embassy Sofia's input for the eighth annual Anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. Bulgaria is primarily a country of origin and transit, and to a lesser degree a country of destination for human trafficking. The past year has seen a significant energizing of the government's leading anti-trafficking agency - the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons (the Commission). It is finally fully staffed, has its own office and receives sufficient resources to implement prevention campaigns as well as to coordinate a comprehensive approach to victim identification and protection at both national and local level. The government has continued to implement anti-trafficking legislation and related regulations emphasizing the close cooperation between law enforcement and NGOs in countering trafficking.

12. Senior GOB officials, even President Georgi Parvanov, spoke out publicly against trafficking in persons, demonstrating renewed government commitment to this issue. After strong public statements by the Prosecutor General, the Interior Minister publicly opposed efforts to legalize prostitution initiated within his ministry in 12006. Anti-trafficking advocates worried that legalization would fuel human trafficking. This about-face by the GOB is significant, given the powerful business interests, including the National Tourism Board, who initially advocated for legalization.

Primary point of contact on trafficking is Political Officer Joslyn Mack- Wilson (mack-wislonjg@state.gov, tel: +359 2937 5276, fax: +359 2937 5320). Approximately 100 hours of staff time were required for the completion of this report. END SUMMARY.

OVERVIEW

1A. Bulgaria is primarily a country of origin and transit, and to a lesser extent a country of destination for trafficking in persons. Law enforcement officials reported an increase in the number of cases of Bulgarian citizens trafficked within the country. Internal trafficking is primarily for purposes of sexual exploitation, particularly in the resort areas along the Black Sea coast and in border towns with Greece.

Most victims trafficked from or through Bulgaria are sent to Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Austria and other Western European countries. Bulgarian victims are also trafficked to destinations in the Balkans - Greece, Turkey, and Macedonia. The

business of prostitution in these areas has traditionally centered around bars and nightclubs, but NGOs report that law enforcement pressure has caused a shift toward call-girl operations managed from private apartments. Because they operate away from the public eye, such prostitution networks are harder for NGOs and law enforcement to monitor and may contribute to a less clear picture of intra-Balkan trafficking networks.

The prosecution service reported 288 victims of trafficking in 2007, of them 53 were under the age of 18.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported assisting 61 victims in Bulgaria in 2007, compared to 82 victims assisted in 2006. Of the victims assisted in 2007, 3 were foreign women trafficked to or through Bulgaria.

The Supreme Cassation Prosecution Service gathers information from all prosecution offices on all trafficking cases from their initiation through sentencing. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) maintains information on the number of trafficking victims based on cases it has actually assisted in its centers. NGOs, including the Nadjia Centre Foundation (NCF) and Animus Association Foundation (AAF), also maintain information on the number of trafficking victims that they have actually assisted.

Under the auspices of a multinational project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons (the Commission) has been designated a focal point for collection and maintenance of statistical data on victims of trafficking. During the year, the Commission's staff actively participated in the development of a transnational referral mechanism and was trained to use special software for victim registration, which would compliment the referral mechanism. The Commission has started preparations for convening a working group,

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comprised of all government and non-government agencies that deal with victims of trafficking, to develop local procedures for data entry.

According to the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate for Combating Organized Crime (GDBOP), IOM and NGOs, young women aged between 18 and 24 tend to be most vulnerable to become victims of trafficking. Also, the IOM and the NCF identify those with lower education and those with problematic family relations as groups more at risk of being trafficked. Minorities, particularly Roma, are more vulnerable to trafficking: Roma account for over one-third of trafficking victims, much higher than their estimated population proportion of between 6 and 7 percent. Roma children are particularly vulnerable to internal and external trafficking for purposes of begging and delinquency. Selling of babies, both in country and abroad, also occurs within the Roma community. Trafficking of pregnant women and forcing them to sell their children abroad remains an elusive problem because the women are free to travel and can not be stopped by border police.

1B. Bulgarian trafficking victims tend to come from regions with high unemployment and poor economic conditions. The NCF noted higher numbers of victims originating from the southwest and the northeast of the country while the AAF reported an upward trend in the number of victims originating from the northwest. The GDBOP and IOM reported that foreign victims came from Romania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Lebanon and Central Asia. The GDBOP, IOM and AAF identified Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, Greece, Turkey, Belgium, France, Spain, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Macedonia as destinations for victims trafficked from and through Bulgaria.

In larger cities such as Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, sexual exploitation tends to be controlled by organized criminal organizations while small crime groups and freelance operators are involved in smaller cities and towns. Foreign victims were principally recruited through promises of work, while the majority of Bulgarian victims were recruited individually through close friends, relatives or acquaintances. Although printed job

advertisements are used less frequently, model agencies continue to publish ads serving as a front to attract victims. A recent trend is for traffickers to recruit young educated girls from poor families by offering them generous education opportunities abroad.

Both Bulgarian and foreign victims of trafficking generally traveled using genuine rather than forged documents. This was universally true in cases involving Bulgarian citizens, who do not require visas to travel to the EU. Victims also tend to be moved frequently from one place to another avoiding detection from law enforcement authorities for undocumented stays.

1C. The Ministry of Interior (MOI), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ministry of Education, State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), Central Commission for Combating Juvenile Delinquency, Supreme Court of Cassation, Supreme Cassation Prosecution and National Investigation Service (NIS) are all involved in anti-trafficking efforts and are represented on the National Anti-Trafficking Commission.

According to the law the Commission serves as a major focal point responsible for coordinating government's anti-trafficking efforts. The Commission was energized by the June 2007 appointment of a functioning secretariat and started actively assuming its responsibilities as the lead anti-trafficking agency. The Commission, which by law is comprised of representatives of different ministries at deputy ministerial level, has previously experienced difficulties in sustaining its day-to-day operations. By contrast, the 2007 staffing of the Commission's secretariat with eight persons helped lay the groundwork for political decision making and actual implementation of policies. The secretariat identified a core group of Ministry experts and further developed their capacity as key consultants on the National Strategy and other issues as they arise. This provided an opportunity for a closer and continuous engagement with all key players. The Government equipped the Commission with essential resources for its daily operation - premises, vehicle, equipment and supplies.

In January 2008, the first local commission was formally established in the coastal city of Burgas. The local commissions replicate the structure and composition of the National Commission at municipal

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level and are administratively subordinate to both the Commission and the mayor. In February, two more local commissions were established in Varna and Sliven, both identified as regions with at risk population. The National Commission has bought equipment and supplies to support the work of the newly established local commissions and has planned staff training.

1D. Officials at high levels of government are committed to combating trafficking and implementing effective rule of law. The government's ability to address trafficking continues to face challenges, including widespread public corruption and bureaucratic procedures. There is no wide-ranging pattern of corruption related to trafficking in persons, however low salaries for government officials and lack of resources expose individual border and customs officials to bribes and threats from criminal groups involved in trafficking. The Commission, as a new and uniquely structured organization, is still establishing clear procedures for communicating and cooperating within the state bureaucracy but has managed to win the commitment of key experts from all relevant agencies. After the withdrawal of major donors in the area, EU funds are eyed as a replacement by both the government and the NGO sector, but they seem difficult to access.

1E. During the reporting period, the Commission has started to assume its obligation to systematically monitor the government's anti-trafficking efforts and implement the overall anti-TIP strategy. In January 2008, the Commission hired a polling agency to assess public knowledge of the problem. The results of this national opinion poll will be used as a basis for developing

government's future prevention campaigns. Again in January, the Commission requested information from all relevant agencies on their 2007 activities to compile an assessment report of government's anti-trafficking efforts.

INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS

1A. In 2002, amendments were adopted to the Criminal Code that set specific punishments for trafficking. Section 159.A of the Criminal Code corresponds to the Palermo Protocol and provides for punishments according to the Protocol. Section 159.B addresses recidivism and severe forms of trafficking and provides for punishments according to the Protocol. A 2004 amendment to the Criminal Code allowed for prosecution of intermediaries involved in baby smuggling. Further revisions to the Code, in effect since October 2006, specifically criminalized trafficking of pregnant women for the purpose of baby selling. A separate provision punishes the mothers who consent to the sale, both in the country and abroad. Police reported disrupting 13 cases of baby selling as of October. The Criminal Code also punishes rape, slavery, forced prostitution and activities related to prostitution. Current Bulgarian legislation allows for the investigation and prosecution of all forms of human trafficking, not only the most severe forms mandated by the Palermo Protocol. Trafficking is among the offenses covered by the 2005 Asset Forfeiture Law, which allows for confiscation of illegally acquired property. Victims of trafficking can also sue for civil damages.

1B. All forms of human trafficking are equally penalized, regardless of the form of exploitation. The punishment for trafficking in persons may include 1 to 8 years in prison and fines up to approximately \$5,000 (8,000 leva). If aggravated circumstances exist -- e.g., a minor or kidnapping was involved -- penalties increase to 2 to 10 years in prison and fines of up to approximately \$6,250 (10,000 leva). Penalties for trafficking persons across borders increase to 3 to 10 years' imprisonment and fines of up to approximately \$9,375 (15,000 leva). The same increased punishment is provided for trafficking of pregnant women for the purpose of baby selling. If the act of trafficking was carried out in connection with an organized crime group or constituted a serious repeat offense, penalties increase to 5 to 15 years' imprisonment with fines of up to approximately \$12,500 (20,000 leva) and the possibility of forfeiture of assets. In 2007, the Prosecution Service did not maintain statistics on the number of imposed suspended sentences. However, it has been designated a focal point for the maintenance of a traffickers' register under the ICMPD-implemented project for the development of a transnational referral mechanism. The register, expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2008, will encompass 40 different indicators for the flow of the criminal proceeding against any given trafficker, including the type of sentence passed.

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1C. As described in paragraph B, labor trafficking is covered by the same legal clauses and warrants the same punishments as other forms of trafficking. Labor recruiters and employers who falsely entice workers or forcibly hold them in the destination countries can be punished with up to 10 years imprisonment. After Bulgaria's accession to the European Union, law enforcement officials report an increase in Bulgarian citizens trafficked abroad for labor purposes, especially for seasonal work to Greece, Italy and Spain. In 2007, the prosecution service launched 16 new investigations of labor-trafficking cases. For the same period, the courts imposed 2 sentences against labor traffickers and there were no acquittals.

1D. Sentences for rape range between 2 and 8 years' imprisonment; sentences increase to between 3 and 10 years if the perpetrator is a repeat offender, or if the victim is underage or a descendent relative. In cases where rape results in serious bodily injury or suicide of the victim, sentences range between 10 and 20 years.

¶E. Prostitution is not prohibited by law but is also not legally regulated. In February 2006 the Ministry of Interior set up a working group to draft legislation to regulate prostitution. The drafting group, backed by powerful business interests kept a low profile, occasionally leaking statements highlighting the health benefits for the prostitutes and the tax revenues for the state budget. In October 2007, both the Interior Minister and the Chief Prosecutor publicly opposed legalizing prostitution, emphasizing its potential to fuel organized crime. These public comments effectively ended the debate, marking a victory for anti-trafficking advocates.

Under the Criminal Code, the activity of a prostitute is not illegal but a variety of activities often associated with prostitution, such as pimping, are illegal. Penalties for related activities include up to 3 years imprisonment for pimping and up to 5 years imprisonment for operating organized prostitution establishments. Forced prostitution is illegal and is punishable by up to 6 years imprisonment for perpetrators or between 3 and 10 years imprisonment for government officials involved in the activity. Inducement to prostitution is punishable by up to 3 years' imprisonment. Prior to the October 2006, revisions of the Criminal Code, the penalty rose to 10 to 20 years if the crime was performed by or through an organized crime group, if the victim was a minor under age 18 or legally incompetent, if two or more persons were induced into prostitution, or if the offense was repeated. In October 2006, amendments to the law inadvertently created a loophole that significantly limited penalties for inducement to prostitution. In a particularly notorious case, a defendant who was appealing his 12-year sentence when the law was amended was released because the new maximum penalty for his crime was three years. After a public outcry, Parliamentarians moved to correct the loophole and in 2007 increased the penalties.

¶F. In 2007, the prosecution service investigated 209 trafficking cases under the special provisions of the Criminal Code. 179 of the investigations concerned trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and 22 dealt with labor exploitation. As a result, the prosecutors filed in court 62 indictments against 97 individuals, all of whom were Bulgarian nationals. A total of 75 persons were convicted on trafficking charges and 3 were acquitted. Of them, 71 were sentenced for trafficking for sexual exploitation and 2 for labor exploitation. Sixty-two of the sentences went through all stages of appeal and the convicts started serving their sentences. In some of the cases, the prosecutors pressed multiple charges against the perpetrators and where there was not sufficient evidence to prove the trafficking charges, the perpetrators were prosecuted for enticement into prostitution. Additionally, 4 investigations were launched under the Criminal Code's provisions on money laundering which involved the proceeds from human trafficking. Offenders convicted of trafficking generally served the full sentences mandated by the court.

¶G. The government and its international and NGO partners provide front-line law enforcement officers with training in the identification and investigation of cases of trafficking. In 2007, the UNHCR and NCF continued implementing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Border Police and the Police Academy under which over 600 law enforcement officers have been trained. Training modules employed by government agencies emphasized sensitivity and the importance of differentiating between trafficking victims and

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offenders. IOM worked closely with law enforcement officials to strengthen their victim identification capacity and continued its education campaign among social workers with a particular emphasis on the staff of the three crisis centers for children. The Department of Justice (DoJ/OPDAT) in cooperation with the NCF organized 5 regional seminars in all appellate regions for judges and prosecutors focusing on curbing corrupt practices related to trafficking in humans. DoJ/OPDAT also completed a series of five regional workshops for prosecutors and police on forfeiting the assets of human trafficking. These workshops were designed to orient prosecutors and law enforcement officials to the need for cutting off the money supply that fuels human trafficking,

especially through use of financial profiling, bringing money laundering cases, and applying asset forfeiture procedures. Consular officers posted to Bulgarian embassies and law enforcement personnel received training on recognizing trafficking victims and how to refer victims to the IOM and NGOs for legal, medical and psychological assistance.

¶H. The GOB actively cooperates with other governments in investigating and prosecuting cases of trafficking. In 2007, the GDBOP participated in two major international police operations targeting human traffickers. There were Bulgarian liaison officers from the MOI working in Athens, Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Skopje, Vienna, Warsaw, at Europol in The Hague, at the SECI Center in Bucharest, and in other locations. These liaison officers actively worked on international trafficking investigations. Bulgarian law enforcement authorities continued joint investigations with Italian and Greek counterparts into the trafficking of Bulgarians for labor exploitation.

¶I. In 2005, the Bulgarian Parliament adopted an amendment to the Constitution allowing the extradition of Bulgarian citizens for crimes committed abroad pursuant to international treaty. Under the terms of the Palermo Protocol, this provision applies to human trafficking as well as other crimes. Implementing legislation allowing for the extradition of Bulgarian nationals has been in force since July 2005. During the year, the Prosecution granted 29 requests for extradition on trafficking charges. Twenty-five of them were Bulgarian nationals and 4 were third-country nationals.

¶J. There is no evidence of government involvement in or tolerance of trafficking on an institutional level. However, there have been reports of low-level law enforcement officials being involved in trafficking-related corruption.

¶K. During the year no government officials, including police officers, were charged with or convicted of trafficking.

¶L. Reporting not applicable to Bulgaria.

¶M. Although Bulgaria does not have an official child sex tourism problem, it is increasingly becoming a destination point, especially along the sea coast, for sexual exploitation. Trafficking of victims to resort areas, mostly internal, often involves young girls aged between 14 and 18, who are considered children under Bulgarian legislation.

PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

¶A. The 2003 Anti-Trafficking Act created a special immigration status for foreign trafficking victims who choose to cooperate in trafficking investigations. The status provides for full residency and employment rights until the end of criminal proceedings. For foreign citizen victims who choose not to cooperate in trafficking investigations, the GOB provides 10 days plus one month for recovery; if at the end of the recovery period victims still choose not to cooperate in the trafficking investigation, they are transported to their country of origin. The recovery period for foreign citizen child victims, at the recommendation of the SACP, is ten days plus two months.

¶B. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) operated three crisis centers for children victims of trafficking and other forms of violence. The centers, designed to help rehabilitate and integrate the children through specialized treatment and education, are under 24-hour police protection. Each center offers psychological and medical assistance to victims and has the capacity to shelter 10 kids aged between 6 and 18 for a period of up to 6

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months. The center's social workers seek to ensure the safe return of the children to their biological families after this period expires and, whenever necessary, to find them appropriate employment

or accommodation in a specialized institution or a foster family. One of the crisis centers, in the village of Balvan, is accommodated in a building which was previously allocated by the municipality to a local NGO for social services to vulnerable groups. The center continues to work closely with the NGO benefiting from its experience and established network of social consultants in nearby localities. The five social consultants, initially supported by the NGO to engage in trafficking prevention activities, are currently employed by the municipality. During the year, the MLSP started negotiations with Sofia's municipal authorities on the allocation of premises to be used as a shelter for children victims of trafficking who are repatriated from abroad.

The Government referred adult trafficking victims to the IOM and NGOs (primarily the NCF) for sheltering and assistance with legal and other needs. In 2007, IOM sheltered 61 victims of trafficking. Additionally AAF assisted 63 victims in their crisis unit. The Anti-Trafficking Act provides for repatriated Bulgarian trafficking victims to receive the same assistance and care as foreign and Bulgarian trafficking victims identified within the country. NGOs and government agencies do not distinguish between foreign victims and Bulgarian citizens in providing assistance to trafficking victims. Trafficking victims receive medical, psychological and psychiatric care by IOM and NGOs such as AAF and NCF.

1C. The Government supports the IOM and NGOs in their assistance to trafficking victims. Part of this assistance includes use of facilities, at below market rates, and police protection for IOM-operated shelters and safe houses throughout the country. NOT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION: IOM's financial standing as of March 2008 is uncertain and the Government has not allocated any direct funding for its activities. The Commission has researched the possibility to request supplemental funding outside the normal budget cycle and has indicated readiness to resort to these procedures should urgent victim protection needs arise.

1D. In 2007, the prosecution service identified 288 victims of trafficking, of which 53 were minors. MOI law enforcement personnel routinely refer victims of trafficking to IOM and NGO partners, particularly the NCF. Children victims were referred to the three state-run centers, under an established children referral mechanism coordinated by the SACP. In 2007, the Commission participated in a multinational project for development of a transnational referral mechanism. Jointly with NGO partners, the Commission started implementation of a project funded by the Dutch government for the elaboration of a comprehensive national referral mechanism compliant with the transnational procedures. The first phase of the project focuses on mapping existing referral practices, both formal and informal, and developing a needs assessment.

1E. Prostitution in Bulgaria is not prohibited by law but is also not specifically addressed.

1F. According to the IOM, victims are treated with full respect for their rights, according to international norms, and are not treated as criminals. Victims are generally not detained, fined, or prosecuted for minor offenses.

1G. The GOB encourages victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases and provides special status for foreign citizen victims who choose to render such assistance. A witness protection program is available to Bulgarian citizen victims who choose to render similar assistance. All trafficking victims have the right to seek assistance from government agencies, and these agencies are obligated to assist them. Victims can also file civil suits for material and moral damages suffered.

1H. Trafficking victims who have chosen to cooperate have been afforded witness protection under the Criminal Procedure Code, which includes withholding of the victim's identity and physical protection by police officers. 2004 legislation established a more sophisticated government witness protection program, which offers special protection measures to witnesses, victims, defendants, suspects, convicts, and experts providing essential testimony, explanations, or information in serious cases, including trafficking, as well as their close relatives. Protective measures for witnesses range from being provided a personal guard and temporary placement in safe houses to changing residence or

workplace to changing identity in extreme cases. The legislation also provides for witnesses to be transferred abroad if there are

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not sufficient security guarantees in country.

1I. In association with the IOM and NGOs, the Government conducted trafficking prevention and awareness programs, including programs for law enforcement officers and consular officers posted to Bulgarian embassies abroad. These programs included segments addressing the legal provisions relating to human trafficking as operational and psychological treatment for trafficking victims.

1J. The Government referred repatriated Bulgarian trafficking victims to the IOM and NGOs for legal, medical and psychological assistance. The Anti-Trafficking Act provides for repatriated Bulgarian trafficking victims to receive the same assistance and care as trafficking victims identified within the country.

1K. In 2007, the Government provided direct assistance to children victims of trafficking in the three shelters operated by the MLSP. Opening one crisis center for adult victims of trafficking is part of the Government's anti-trafficking draft strategy for 2008. In 2007, the IOM continued to be involved in addressing trafficking and assisting trafficking victims. The AAF and NCF also provided assistance to trafficking victims. All three organizations report having excellent cooperation with Government officials, on a national and local level, including support for shelters and awareness/prevention campaigns, providing protection and support to the organizations and their representatives. The government does not allocate direct funding to such groups, but works with them closely on identification and referral. NOT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION: NGOs and government officials also cooperate to facilitate prosecution of trafficking perpetrators by providing witness protection and assistance to victims of trafficking who testify against their traffickers.

PREVENTION

1A. Government officials at all levels are committed to combating trafficking in persons. Political will to address the problem received a new impetus in 2007 with high-level public figures, including the President, the Interior Minister and the Chief Prosecutor, condemning the devastating effects of trafficking.

1B. In October the Commission organized a national awareness campaign to officially acknowledge the EU day for combating human trafficking. Activities included a press conference, widely covered in national media, an expert workshop, a discussion with university students preceded by a ceremony for signing a Memorandum with the university and an exhibition. The Commission produced more than 1 000 posters to advertise the campaign. In December, in partnership with the U.S. Embassy, the Commission organized several events to commemorate the 16-days of activism to eliminate violence against women, including a press conferences and a round table on prostitution. The highlight of the campaign was the Bulgarian premier of the documentary film, "Cargo: Innocence Lost," by U.S. director Michael Cory Davis, which was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and senior magistrates. The Commission gained rights to use the movie in its prevention activity and produced 3 000 posters to publicize future educational screenings for vulnerable groups. As part of a joint project with the NGO Face to Face titled "Every child can become victim of trafficking, especially the child we rarely see", the Commission published and started distribution of 1 000 posters and 5 000 brochures. The Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to implement a trafficking awareness program aimed at standardizing identification and referral procedures for victims of trafficking by Bulgarian consular officers posted abroad.

1C. The energizing of the Commission has provided momentum to the anti-trafficking sector. The Commission enjoys excellent relations with international partners, NGOs and governmental agencies; and representatives from these sectors comment that the appointment of a

functioning secretariat has significantly improved coordination within the sector.

¶D. Effective monitoring of immigration and emigration patterns is hampered by the fact that travel between Bulgaria and its neighbors, as well as to the EU is largely visa-free. In addition, the overall number of trafficking victims is a tiny fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian citizens working abroad legally. The National Border Police actively monitors airports and land border crossings for evidence of trafficking in persons; however, with Bulgaria's membership in the EU, passport control for EU citizens is

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becoming less stringent.

¶E. As described in section C. of the Overview the Commission serves as a multi-agency institution with policy-level membership and its own dedicated expert-level staff. It is the main point of contact on government's anti-trafficking policy for international and local partners. The Commission's effectiveness has been reinforced with the 2007 establishment of an expert advisory group, with representatives from all agencies that are members of the Commission. In addition, the National implementation team for the development of the transnational referral mechanism, which includes representatives of the Prosecution Service, GDBOP, Border Police, AAF and the Commission, serves as a task force for refining return procedures. The Commission also hosts regular meetings of a coordination group, comprised of international donors and NGO representatives, to promote cooperation and advancement of anti-trafficking efforts.

¶F. The government's current National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking was adopted by the Commission in June 2007 and was approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2007. It was developed in consultation with all relevant government agencies, as well as NGOs and the IOM. The strategy has been disseminated to all relevant implementing partners. In February 2008, the Commission circulated a draft 2008 Strategy, developed by the expert group, for comments and input to all relevant agencies and NGOs.

¶G. In 2007, the Commission launched awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the dangers of sex trafficking (See Prevention, B). Such efforts were directed at potential victims, customers, as well as educating law enforcement and services providers about sex trafficking. In January 2008, the Commission announced the results of a public opinion poll which will be used as a basis for developing the government's future prevention campaigns. In 2007, the Ministry of Interior rejected plans to legalize prostitution.

¶H. Bulgaria does not have an identified problem with child sex tourism by Bulgarian nationals.

¶I. Reporting not required for Bulgaria.

BEYRLE